

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY: S/S-O: LMATTESON

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 122588 TOSEC 020017

FOL REPEAT OF SEOUL 3739 TO SECSTATE INFO TAIPEI TOKYO
PEKING HONG KONG CINCPAC MAY 27

QTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 3739

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KS, CH

SUBJECT: CAPTURE OF ROK FISHING BOAT

REF: A. COMUSKOREA 242205Z MAY 75 (NOTAL)

B. SEOUL 3031 OF MAY 13, 1974

1. REF A REPORTED SEIZURE AND ABDUCTION OF ROK FISHING VESSEL BY APPROXIMATELY TEN PRC FISHING BOATS IN AREA ROUGHLY 130 MILES SOUTH SOUTHWEST OF ROK ISLAND OF SOHUKSAN IN EAST CHINA SEA IN EARLY MORNING HOURS OF MAY 25. VESSEL HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH FRIENDLY FORCES BY RADIO AT TIME OF CAPTURE BUT HAS NOT BEEN HEARD FROM SINCE.

2. ACCORDING TO MOFA NORTHWEST ASIA DIVISION CHIEF KWON PYONG-HYON, ROK ON MAY 25 REQUESTED JAPAN TO APPROACH PRC ON ITS BEHALF TO VERIFY REPORTED CAPTURE AND ASCERTAIN WHEREABOUTS OF VESSEL AND ITS CREW. JAPANESE INFORMED KOREANS MAY 27 THAT THEY HAD BEEN
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IN CONTACT WITH CHINESE BUT HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED

RESPONSE FROM PRC.

3. KWON SAID THIS IS FIRST KNOWN INSTANCE OF CHINESE ABDUCTING A ROK VESSEL ON THE HIGH SEAS, ALTHOUGH THEY TOOK SEVERAL JAPANESE FISHING BOATS IN EARLY NINETEEN-FIFTIES. MOREOVER, IT IS FIRST CASE OF FRICTION BETWEEN PRC AND ROK FISHERMEN, SINCE PRC WARNING IN MAY OF LAST YEAR THAT ROK FISHING BOATS MUST CEASE CAUSING "INCIDENTS." (REF B). KWON RECALLED THAT ROKS HAD PUBLICLY STATED THAT PRC CHARGES LAST YEAR HAD BEEN UNTRUE BUT THAT FISHERMEN HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO INCREASE PRECAUTIONS AGAINST INCIDENTS. HE SAID THAT HEIGHTENED PRECAUTIONS INCLUDED KEEPING PRUDENT DISTANCE FROM CHINESE BOATS. ALTHOUGH ABDUCTION APPARENTLY TOOK PLACE IN SAME AREA WHERE FRICTION HAD ARISEN LAST YEAR, KWON OBSERVED HAT VESSELS OF TWO NATIONS COMMONLY INTERMIX AND IN FACT ANOTHER ROK BOAT WAS FIVE MILES AWAY FROM THE ABDUCTED ONE BUT WAS NOT MOLESTED.

4. ALTHOUGH ROK PRESS HAS GIVEN STORY FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE, KWON SAID THAT MOFA WOULD PREFER TO AVOID PUBLICITY. ROKG IS CONCERNED OVER IMPLICATIONS OF THIS UNPRECEDENTED CHINESE ACTION BUT WISHES TO GIVE PRC TIME TO RESPOND BEFORE MAKING ANY PUBLIC PROTEST. KWON NOTED THAT PRC MEDIA HAVE APPARENTLY NOT MENTIONED THE INCIDENT.
SNEIDER UNQTE INGERSOLL

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